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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF OREGON  
EUGENE DIVISION**

Elizabeth HUNTER; et al., on behalf of )  
themselves and all others similarly situated, )

Plaintiffs, )

v. )

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION and )  
Suzanne GOLDBERG, in her official capacity as )  
Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, )  
U.S. Department of Education, )

Defendants. )

Case No. 6:21-cv-00474-AA

**DECLARATION OF ANDREW  
DOUGLAS HARTZLER**

I, Andrew Douglas Hartzler, declare:

1. I am over 18 years of age and have personal knowledge of the matters stated in this declaration and would testify truthfully to them if called upon to do so.
2. I am a resident of Tulsa, Oklahoma.
3. I was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri.
4. I identify as gay and my pronouns are he/him/his.
5. I currently work as a Case Manager at a psychiatric facility in Tulsa, OK.

6. I received a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Chemistry from Oral Roberts University (ORU) in May 2021.
7. I am starting my Master of Science in Clinic Psychology at Oklahoma State University in Spring 2021.
8. On March 3, 2017, a recruiter from ORU visited my high school where she met with me one on one and answered questions I had about the university.
9. Prior to our meeting, I had done a simple Google search, something like “Oral Roberts University LGBTQ” and I had come across a Tulsa World article that described a woman who was denied readmission to Oral Roberts University in the fall due to her marriage with another woman.
10. I felt as if Oral Roberts University would not be a safe place to “come out of the closet” but I wanted confirmation of my assumptions. I told the recruiter that I had read the Honor Code and wanted to know what the University’s policy was regarding students who did not identify as heterosexual. The recruiter seemed a bit caught off guard and required a moment to collect her own thoughts. She told me that sexual relations of any kind while outside of marriage are not allowed at ORU.
11. I then asked if gay students are allowed at ORU and was informed that students are only in violation of the Honor Code when one “acts on their homosexual thoughts.” Intrigued by her response, I went on to ask her what happens when a student does not abide by the Honor Code, and she responded by saying it is on a case-by-case basis.
12. In the Fall of 2017, I began attending ORU and immediately I noticed a plethora of students who, in my mind, were likely a sexual minority. Many of those students would state that they were “struggling” with their sexuality if they admitted to being a sexual minority. Many were also often leaders in the student body, whether they were a Chaplain or Resident Advisor or even a Head Resident Advisor.
13. While at ORU, I only encountered two professors who were accepting of my gay sexuality to the point of me feeling comfortable enough to open up to them about the trauma I was facing at ORU. Both faculty members were in my field of study, psychology.
14. One supportive professor told me during my sophomore year, “my office is a safe space” and “I can’t imagine what it would be like being gay and going to this university.” I found myself in her office quite often, and she expressed to me her disappointment with the way the university treated sexual minorities. She also told me on multiple occasions that she doesn’t intend on staying with the university for much longer.
15. The second supportive professor I had was my senior research paper advisor. The title of my paper was “A Review of the Relationship Between Suicidal Ideation and Sexual Risk Behavior in Gay and Bisexual Men.” He asked why I chose the topic, and I told him that the topic aligns greatly with my experience during my late teenage years. He told me that

the only reason I was able to write about such a topic was because the Chair of the Psychology Department was on sabbatical at the time.

16. During my second semester of junior year, near the end of January in 2020, I received a phone call from the office of the Dean of Students to schedule a time to meet. I met with both of the two Deans.
17. They informed me that someone reported me for “homosexual activity” and alcohol consumption. I had brought my boyfriend, who did not attend ORU, into the dorms one evening where he did not even spend the night and checked into the dorm properly.
18. I remember a Dean asking, “Why did you want to come to ORU?” as if she was trying to figure out why a gay person would go to ORU. I explained that I did not have a choice in which university I attended.
19. A Dean informed me that this was my warning, and I was no longer allowed to have non-university visitors. She also informed me that I would be meeting another Dean once a week until the end of the semester to keep me “accountable.”
20. Then the Dean handed me a form and said I needed to sign it before I could leave. Fortunately, I decided to read the form before signing it, and it was a FERPA status change form to mark me as “dependent.” I asked why I had to sign it and was told that she needed to talk to my parents.
21. I refused to sign the form and the Dean became visibly agitated, while the other Dean still hadn’t said a word since the meeting started. I was told that it was in my “best interest to sign the form” and then once again instructed me to sign the form and stated I could change my status back to independent once she spoke to my parents. I refused to sign the FERPA form and left the room.
22. A week or two after the meeting with the two Deans, I met with a different Dean. During this meeting I felt like I was right back in the conversion therapy program that I attended during my youth. Once again I was told that my “lifestyle” was a sin and that I needed to be “fixed.”
23. The Dean used fear-mongering tactics to try and scare me away from a “homosexual lifestyle” as he called it.
24. For example, the Dean instructed me to read several verses from the Bible which he referenced while condemning me for my suspected romantic encounters with other men.
25. The Dean pressured me for names and information about other students at ORU who were, as he said, “struggling with their identity”, saying that I was “allowing them to suffer in Hell” if I did not reveal their names so that such students could receive “help.”
26. The Dean conveyed to me that “same sex attraction” was “unnatural” and “disobedient to God.”

27. The experience was a painful reminder of being rejected for something that I simply have no control over. It began to affect my perception of reality. It was the all too familiar struggle of maintaining my own self-love in the midst of being persuaded to hate my true identity.
28. I felt embarrassed and ashamed for being punished for my sexuality.
29. I had always feared such persecution, beginning in my religious high school through my graduation from ORU. However, I was not prepared for the wound inflicted by my fear of persecution becoming reality.
30. I felt alone. My mind began unconsciously finding itself trapped in dark corners that hadn't been visited for years.
31. Ultimately, after I disclosed the events to my parents and they sided with the ORU administration, I felt unsafe discussing the events with friends.
32. Fortunately, due to scheduling conflicts and COVID-19, I only had one "accountability" meeting with the Dean.
33. Freshman year, following the winter holiday, I returned to ORU and began to see most of my friends find love interests and flaunt their heterosexuality while I was forced to suppress my own romantic endeavors out of fear of retribution. The stains left from the post-disclosure rejection left me hesitant to disclose my sexuality even to the closest of friends. It was mentally exhausting to have to hide behind a mask.
34. In the Spring of 2018, I was introduced to "banquet season" and I watched as my love interest felt neglected because he couldn't be my date. It was during this time at ORU that I entered one of the darkest seasons of my life where suicidal ideations clouded my ability to find joy in life.
35. I lost a significant amount of weight, becoming the lightest I have ever been. I couldn't fall asleep at night and had difficulty finding a reason to get out bed.
36. I think that this experience was even more significant than my time at a conversion therapy camp because college is highly anticipated, at least for gay youth, as a place where one can finally be true to themselves and explore one's sexuality.
37. I am thankful to be a survivor of Oral Roberts University's discrimination and harassment on the basis of my sexual orientation.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, and that this declaration was executed this 2nd day of August, 2021.

By: s/Andrew Douglas Hartzler

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Andrew Douglas Hartzler